

CATAWBA SMALL AREA PLAN

Background and Recommendations

In September 1999, the Board of Commissioners directed staff to begin the process of developing small area plans (SAP), as identified in the County's Strategic Growth Plan. A citizen-based committee for the Catawba area, consisting of thirteen members, was appointed by the Board of Commissioners in November 2002. The committee met monthly to develop a plan which addresses the following seven issues: 1) land use and community design; 2) transportation; 3) community facilities and public services; 4) housing; 5) economic development; 6) natural resources; and 7) cultural resources.

In order to obtain input on these issues, the committee sponsored a community meeting in May 2003. Seventeen (17) citizens attended this meeting held at the St. Marks Lutheran Church - Family Life Center in Claremont. The main issues presented at this meeting included preservation of rural character, concern over lack of public water and sewer and the need for community recreation opportunities, especially for children. Information received at this meeting was used by the committee in the development of the plan's guiding principles and recommendations.

Following are highlights of the Plan's recommendations as formulated by the committee:

- Extensive residential rezonings – the plan recommends the rezoning of all the residential-zoned property within their district. Approximately 79.8% of the land is proposed to be rezoned to R-1 which would not allow any type of manufactured home. Around 18% is proposed to be rezoned to R-3, which allows for doublewide manufactured homes and stick-built homes (no singlewide manufactured homes.) The basis for this recommendation is the changing trend of residential development in the area with no permits for manufactured homes issued in 2002. Other factors include the desire for the preservation of the rural character of the area and scenic views along Hwy. 70.
- The majority of the district is designated as higher density with lot sizes based on the availability of public water and/or sewer. If public water and sewer is not available, lot sizes would be one home per acre. If public water is provided, the average lot size would be one home per $\frac{3}{4}$ acre. Where public water and sewer is provided the average lot size would be one home per $\frac{1}{2}$ acre.
- Medium residential density is proposed for the northeast corner of the district, with one-acre lot sizes recommended.
- Low residential density is proposed for the northwest corner of the planning area, which is bounded on the south by the railroad and east by Wike Road. Low residential density is defined as one home per two acres.
- The plan recommends that residential subdivisions provide a 30-foot vegetative buffer along the road frontage which is part of the open space requirement, to be determined by the Unified Development Ordinance.
- Commercial uses would be allowed in the "Community Center" at the I-40 interchange of Oxford School Road in addition to the neighborhood commercial nodes. The neighborhood nodes are located at the intersections of Balls Creek Road/Hwy. 10, Bethany Church Road/Hwy. 10, Mt. Olive Church Road/ Hwy. 10 and Old Catawba Road/B&B Road.

- Standards for new commercial developments include: landscaping along road frontage and within parking lots, aesthetically pleasing and walkable developments and encouragement of mixed-use developments (commercial with residential uses in the same building). The Community Center is encouraged to be a “gateway” development with unique design concepts incorporated into a mixed-use walkable commerce area serving as a destination point in the County. Coordination between Claremont and Catawba for the development of a regional community center is encouraged.
- A light-business industrial park is recommended for the area south of I-40 across the northern portion of the Catawba area. A mixture of commercial, office and light industrial uses is proposed for this area. Standards for new developments include landscaping along road frontage, limitations on signs, interconnectivity of internal streets and control of access onto the main roads.
- A feasibility study is recommended to evaluate the potential development of a greenway system along Lyle Creek from the I-40 Rest Area to the Bunker Hill Covered Bridge and into the Town of Catawba.

Note: See the recommendations, in their entirety, here.

The draft plan was then presented to the public at a community meeting held in January 2004. The committee reviewed comments received from this meeting and made some minor amendments to the plan. These changes included incorporating a request to NCDOT for a traffic signal study at the intersection of Hwy. 10 and Boggs Road and the grandfathering of existing manufactured home parks and subdivisions affected by the rezonings.

In January 2004, the committee Chair met with the Board of Commissioners in one-on-one meetings to review the plan recommendations in detail. Recommendations for amendments were made to the committee and were subsequently reviewed by the committee at its February 10, 2004 meeting. The Committee added a Catawba River Corridor district, consistent with the St. Stephens/Oxford Small Area Plan. They also qualified that the amount of open space required in residential developments will be determined during the Unified Development Ordinance process and that the future business/light industrial park at I-40 would serve as a “regional” facility. With these amendments, the committee recommended the Catawba Small Area Plan at its February 10, 2004 meeting.

On March 8, 2004, the Catawba committee met jointly with the Planning Board in a work session to review the plan recommendations in detail. Several minor amendments were made to the plan. These included: pursuing designation of Hwy. 70 as a scenic byway, installation of a traffic signal at Hewitt Road/NC Hwy. 10 when the B&B/Hewitt Road connector is constructed, designation of the B&B/Hewitt Road connector as a bicycle route and promotion of the historic Perkins property for preservation and adaptive re-use. The Planning Board then conducted its public hearing on the plan at its March 29, 2004 meeting. The Board recommended the plan unanimously to the Board of Commissioners.

The Board of Commissioners will conduct its public hearing and accept your comments on the plan at its meeting on Monday, April 19, 2004 beginning at 7:00 p.m. at the Sherrill Tobacco Company building at 100 South Main Street in the Town of Catawba. Upon receiving public comments, the Board may decide to adopt the plan as presented, adopt an amended plan or request additional information prior to adoption.

Should you have any questions regarding the Catawba Small Area Plan, you may contact Mary K. George, County Planner, at (828) 465-8264.